GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:40
ANSWERED ON:20.11.2002
PEACE TALKS IN SRI LANKA
SUDARSANA E.M. NATCHIAPPAN

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to offer their support to the Norwegian-facilitated peace talks between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE; and

(b) if so, the details thereof;

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA)

(a) Government of India supports the peace process underway in Sri Lanka. Press Statement is annexed.

(b) The Sri Lankan Government and Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) signed a ceasefire agreement, mediated by Norway, on 22 February, 2002 for an indefinite and mutually-agreed ceasefire from the midnight of 23 February, 2002.

The first round of talks between SLG and LTTE was held at Sattahip Naval base, Thailand on September 16-18, 2002The LTTE spokesperson told the press that it favoured political settlement reached through peaceful means and the SLG spokesperson told the press that the SLG would offer amplest degree of devolution within the framework of Sri Lankan unity and territorial integrity. The talks concentrated on three subjects
(i) framework for future talks;
(ii) continuance of the ceasefire agreement; and
(iii) North East development issues. It was agreed to set up two Joint Task Forces (JTF).One for humanitarian and reconstruction activities and security issues which could appeal for and receive international aid. A second Joint Committee was agreed to be set up to address security issues and the LTTE`s interest in reducing the security perimeter and SLG`s concerns in case of resumed fighting.

The second round of talks concluded on November 03 in Thailand. It was reported that LTTE had agreed to work with SLG to resolve political, military and development issues. Three Sub-Committees were formed as follows:

(a) The Sub-Committee for Political Affairs will work to develop an acceptable political model to end the conflict.

(b) The Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North and the East. Will identify humanitarian and rehabilitation needs, prioritize implementation, decide allocation of the financial resources, determine implementing agencies .

(c) The Sub-Committee on De-Escalation and Normalisation to look into issues relating to the high security zones and act as a mechanism for a structured dialogue between the two parties.
The Third and Fourth round of Talks will be held between December 2-5, 2002 and January 6-9, 2003 at Oslo and Thailand respectively.

Annexure

GOI Press Statement

GOI noted with satisfaction the successful conclusion of the first round of talks between parties to the Sri Lankan conflict, held on 16-18 September 2002 at Sattahip, Thailand.The adoption of a conciliatory approach to negotiations, which resulted in agreement for further meetings and the decision to deal jointly with important issues including internally displaced persons, humanitarian and reconstruction activities, demining, etc, is welcome. The Government of India has, in the past and continues to support efforts to take the peace process towards a settlement that meets the just aspirations of all elelments of Sri Lankan society within a sovereign, united Sri Lanka.